

TURN TO THE LORD

by Megan Linthicum

KEY VERSE:

2 Kings 23:25 "Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him."

FAITH STORY:

2 Kings 22:11-20

FAITH FOCUS:

When King Josiah heard the words of the book of the law and realized that his people had not been worshipping God properly, he humbled himself and sought the Lord. The Lord told Josiah that the judgment coming upon Judah for its sins would not come until after Josiah's death.

SESSION GOAL:

To realize that God honors repentance and radical worship.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

At the end of the class session the students will be able to:

- Compare the evil of Manasseh to the righteousness of Josiah.
- Identify God's judgment and grace in Judah's story.
- Think about one thing they have changed or need to change in obedience to God.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 Newsprint
- 2 Markers
- 3 Tape
- 4 Old shirt that can be torn
- 5 6 copies of the drama script
- 6 Be prepared to share a time when you made a radical change in obedience to God
- 7 Pipe cleaners

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (2 minutes)

Ask the question: *Have you ever done something and later found out you were not supposed to do it?* Allow a couple of minutes for answers that merely explain what the event was, not how they felt about it or their response to it.

CONNECT: (10 minutes)

Say: *If you felt guilty about the situation you mentioned, go stand on the left side of the room. If you felt exhilarated, stand on the right side of the room.*

Ask students from both sides to explain why they felt they way they did. **Then say:**

If you confessed your mistake and turned yourself in, stand on the left side of the room. If you said nothing and kept it a secret, stand on the right side.

Again, ask students from both sides to explain why they responded the way they did.

Transitional Statement: *Let's find out what one king did after he found out his people were not worshiping God the way they were supposed to.*

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (20 minutes)

Divide the students into three groups. Ask Group 1 to read 2 Kings 21:1-6 and make a list on the newsprint of at least five evil things King Manasseh did. Ask Group 2 to rehearse the skit. Ask Group 3 to read 2 Kings 23:1-24 and make a list on the newsprint of at least five changes King Josiah made. Then bring the groups back together and run through the exercises in the following order.

- 1 Have the students from Group 1 tape their list to the wall. Give background information on King Manasseh (see Insights from Scripture) and briefly discuss the list with the students.

To illustrate God's judgment on these sins, ask someone to read 2 Kings 21:10-12.

- 2 Group 2 does the skit.

- 3 Ask students from Group 3 to tape their list next to the list of Group 1. Briefly discuss the list, Josiah's humility, repentance, radical changes, and God's grace toward Josiah.

Comparison List (more than 5 listed and not limited to these alone)

King Manasseh

- Rebuilt high places his father had destroyed
- Followed abominable practices of other nations
- Erected altars for Baal
- Made a sacred pole
- Sacrificed his son in burnt offering
- Practiced soothsaying
- Dealt with mediums and with wizards

King Josiah

- Defiled the high places
- Got rid of idolatrous priests
- Burned the vessels made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven
- Broke down the houses of the male temple prostitutes
- Removed the horses dedicated to the sun
- Made a covenant with the Lord to follow the Lord
- Got rid of the mediums and wizards

Read 2 Kings 23:25

APPLY: (5–7 minutes)

Lead a discussion and make a list on the newsprint of what modern-day things teenagers might face that would call for a radical change to obey God.

RESPOND: (10 minutes)

Ask: *Have you ever made a radical change in order to please God? Is there something that you might need to do in obedience to God?* Hand out pipe cleaners and ask students to make a symbol of either a radical change they have made in their lives or one that they might consider making in. Share your story of when you've made a radical change to please God and invite youth to share what their pipe cleaners represent if they wish.

Close with a prayer, asking God to be with each student as they seek to turn their lives over to the Lord.

INSIGHTS FROM THE SCRIPTURE:

Cultural/Historical: After the reign of King Solomon, the Israelite people were divided into two kingdoms. Israel was the Northern Tribe; Judah was the Southern Tribe. King Manasseh and King Josiah were kings in the Southern Tribe. King Manasseh was a descendant of Joseph who did evil in the sight of the Lord. He worshiped other gods, participated in child sacrifices (even sacrificing his own child), made graven images, sought spiritists and mediums, etc (2 Kings 21:1-18). Manasseh misled the people to do more evil than the pagan nations that were driven out by the Lord. He came into power at the age of twelve and reigned for fifty-five years. He was the grandfather to King Josiah. Josiah became King at the age of eight and reigned for thirty-one years in Jerusalem. During his eighteenth year as King, the Temple was being repaired. It was during this time that the Book of the Law was found. We don't know if the book was mistakenly misplaced or mischievously hidden by corrupt kings. The Book of the Law was probably the five books of Moses—Genesis through Deuteronomy. This book was instructional for godly living and worship. Since this book was missing, we can conclude that the people were not worshiping the Lord properly. They had gone astray in their worship.

VOCABULARY:

- 1 Asherah:** refers to a cultic object representing the presence of the Canaanite goddess Asherah. When the people of Israel entered Palestine (after wandering in the wilderness), they were to have nothing to do with the idolatrous religions of its inhabitants. This cult object was manufactured from wood (Judg. 6:26; 1 Kings 14:15) and it could be burned (Deut. 12:3). Some scholars conclude that it was a sacred pole set up near an altar to Baal. Since there was only one goddess with this name, the plural probably represents her several "poles."
- 2 Tore his clothes** (2 Kings 22:11): Usually such "rending" of clothes is an expression of grief (Gen. 37:34; 44:13; 2 Sam. 13:19).

DRAMA SCRIPT:

This script needs 6 or more people. Josiah needs to wear a shirt that can be torn. Have the students act out the scenes described by the narrator.

Characters: Narrator, Priest, King, other officials, Huldah

Narrator: In the eighteenth year of King Josiah's reign, a Priest found the book of the law. He gave the book to the King to read. The king heard the words of the book of the law, and discovered that his people had not been worshiping the Lord according to the Law of Moses. He tore his clothes, wept, and said to the Priest and other officials...

King Josiah: Go!! Ask the Lord about the words in the book that was found. Ask for me, for all the people, and for all Judah. The Lord's anger is burning against us, because our ancestors did not obey the words of this book; they did not do all the things written for us to do. (Then he rips up his shirt, showing much grief and emotion.)

Narrator: So the Priest and other officials went to visit the prophetess, Huldah. And she said...

Huldah: This is what the Lord says: "I will bring trouble to this place and to the people living here, as it is written in the book which the king of Judah has read. The people of Judah have left me and have burned incense to other gods. They have made me angry by all that they have done. My anger burns against this place like a fire, and it will not be put out!"

Narrator: Then she went on to say...

Huldah: Tell the king of Judah this is what the Lord says about the words you heard: "When you heard my words against this place and its people, you became sorry for what you had done and humbled yourself before me. I said they would be cursed and would be destroyed. You tore your clothes to show how upset you were, and you cried in my presence. This is why I have heard you," says the Lord. "So I will let you die, and you will be buried in peace. You won't see all the trouble I will bring to this place."

Narrator: They took the message back to the king. He then brought great change to Judah.